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[The following editorial comment appeared in a December, 1977 issue of the Guyana Chronicle. It was authored by Dental Surgeon Dr. Ng-a-Fook who spent several inspiring days at Jonestown.]

COMMENT

Peoples Temple: A First Class Example Of Community Life

People in the Northwest District are much happier today because of the visit to the settlements of Port Kaituma and Matthews Ridge by Dental Surgeon Ng-a-Fook. During his three day visit he saw first hand a happy blending of races at Jonestown, the Christian Temple center at Kaituma, which he said is "a first-class example of community life." He did extractions, fillings, etc., at Port Kaituma and Matthews Ridge. Some 800 people, all members of the Peoples Temple, are living at the giant agricultural project at Jonestown, aimed at helping Guyana with farming, while also helping make Jonestown self-sufficient in food and housing.

At the area known as Jonestown, the Pastor and founder, the Rev. Jim Jones, has come under fire from reactionary forces in the U.S.A., who see the prosperous agricultural project and the communal life enjoyed by its members there, as a threat to the old established order.

But more and more the evidence is coming to light in support of the Peoples Temple and its very human activities at Jonestown. A very high elected California State Official who visited Jonestown, has described the Peoples Temple organization as "the most significant force today in the area of human rights, social change, and concrete service work." An American attorney, Charles Garry, who visited Jonestown as recently as November 6, told the Sun Reporter on his return to the United States, "I have been in paradise. I saw a community where there is no such thing as racism. No one sees the color of his skin, whether he is black, brown, yellow, red or white. I also saw that no one thinks in terms of sex, no one feels superior to anyone else. I don't know any community in the world today that has been able to solve the problems of male sex supremacy. That does not exist in Jonestown."

There is a very high level of medical care in Jonestown. Right at the moment there is no dentist, but it was to this need that Dr. Ng-a-Fook undertook his charitable mission there. "It was a very rewarding experience," he said. "I have never before seen so many people of varying races working happily side-by-side in the fields without a single spark of friction. With its own school, sawmill, electricity, roads, houses, and so on, all being scrupulously clean, I could not help but be impressed." Doctor Ng-a-Fook, who once turned in his U.S. land and immigrant visa at the suggestion of Cde. Malcolm, in order to serve the needs of the people of Guyana and has since been working there for 18 years, visited the Northwest as part of a promise he made to his father, the late pioneer frontiersman Peter Ng-a-Fook, who performed his charitable works among the people in mining and rural areas.

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Guy Wright

Fresh start in a jungle for The City's misfits

They cut a road seven miles into the South American rain forest and then made a clearing. Today if you visit that clearing in the jungle you will find a little band of misfits from the streets of San Francisco trying to start a new life.

You'll find a purse snatcher feeding pigs, a shoplifter hoeing corn, a transvestite driving a tractor, a prostitute and a couple of dope addicts in the sewing shed making their own clothes.

They are succeeding remarkably well, according to the Rev. Jim Jones, pastor of Peoples Temple on Geary Street and originator of this unusual experiment in human salvage.

"What I see is turning me into an environmental determinist," he said. "We take incorrigibles — people no one could handle. Down there they straighten themselves out. I don't know the explanation. With the dramatic change in environment comes a dramatic change in the person."

Life there is kibbutz-style. The transplanted San Franciscans live in cottages and eat in a messhall that they built themselves — built with lumber from the purpleheart trees they felled to make the clearing and then cut into boards with a sawmill they had brought along.

Three years ago the first contingent arrived. Now they have a septic tank sewage system, machine shop, school, church, rec hall. They grow corn, cassava, papaya, coconut. They raise pigs, 5,000 chickens and are introducing cattle.

"Everyone works but no one is forced," Jones said. "Pretty soon after they arrive the work ethic just makes a comeback. No one is forced to stay either. But not one person has requested to come home."

By no means have the exiles consigned themselves to jungle rot. They are cooled by the trade wind, and at night a blanket feels good. They can visit a nearby town, and some boys date native girls. By ham radio they maintain contact with the Peoples Temple here, which also sends them casettes of selected TV shows.

Jones refers to the jungle outpost simply as "the agricultural project," which is how it began. Two years as a missionary in Brazil gave him a two-fold idea.

Just north of Brazil is the little nation of Guyana, once a British plantation colony. Jones persuaded the Guyana government to let him start a model farm to show the advantages of multi-crop agriculture in the tropics. He also wanted to use the farm as a haven where San Francisco's misfits could get away from their pressures. Guyanese officials were dubious, at first, but Pastor Jones is a persuasive man.

Today there are 130 problem people on the model farm and a staff of 21. The staff, which includes nine teachers, was recruited from career people who felt something was missing from their lives. The father figure was a high powered insurance executive. An MIT man handles engineering. A Baptist minister, at 103, is launching a new career.

The problem people, besides the usual losers from the street, include the embittered son of a CIA agent, a school arsonist, a boy who cuts off cats' heads and, the youngest, a 5-year-old rated as a genius and a sociopath.

Despite the claims of near-perfect success, no one has been sent home as rehabilitated. Jones doesn't see that as necessarily how the story ends. "We don't tell people their time is up," he said. "They are free to stay as long as they feel they should be there."

He told about a new arrival who woke up to the tropic dawn, the song of exotic birds, the soft kiss of the trade wind. The young man threw out his arms and shouted, "Man, the Fillmore has seen the last of me."